

20 April 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant for Public Affairs to the DCI

SUBJECT : Release of CIA's Crop Estimates

1. Attachment A was brought to our attention by the USDA public relations office. My concerns are the erroneous statements that CIA's crop estimates are publicly available. Left as is, we will be deluged with requests for CIA crop information.

2. The facts are that the CIA's crop estimates are classified and the CIA does not make its estimates available to American farmers or to any other sector of the general public.

3. We recommend that your office contact the Agriculture Council of America (ACA) directly to advise them of the above and, further, to request ACA to publish an appropriate clarification in ACA UPDATE.

4. Attachment B is a suggested letter to the ACA.



Chief,
Environment and Resource Analysis Center
Geographic and Cartographic Research

Attachments: 2

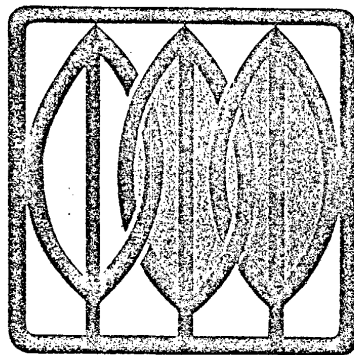
- A. ACA UPDATE, March 1977
- B. Suggested letter to ACA

cc: OGC
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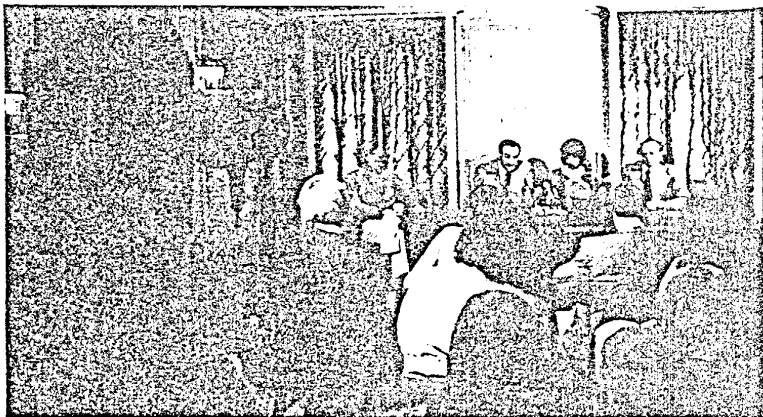


ACA UPDATE

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By noon, Mutual Broadcasting, a 700 station network, had aired the story. By 12:30 p.m., the story moved over the AP and UPI print service wire...

Dale Hendricks, ACA Chairman, delivered the main statement announcing the results of the National Tour's questionnaire on February 18 to the

column, and the Independent TV Network Association, which serves national media markets, filmed a story.

A sampling of other media represented at the conference includes the *Christian Science Monitor*, U.S. News, Fairchild Publishing, Grocery

"It is fair to say that there was a lot of 'finger-pointing' by consumers who blamed anonymous 'middlemen' and agribusiness, but I want to make it clear that our purpose isn't to blame anyone for the problems we are here to work constructively to find areas where meaningful action can be taken."

also points to the feeling of community that develops when a cooperative venture is undertaken. Maintaining that feeling of community while she is living across town in the vice-presidential mansion is an important factor contributing to her continued participation.

The thousands of buying clubs like Mrs. Mondale's demonstrate that a

But while co-op shoppers like Mrs. Mondale get fresher products, save money, and have fun doing it, they never affect more than a small part of their own household budgets and are not apt to develop any economic clout.

But the greatly expanded number and types of food co-ops indicates that the

In certain areas, the larger, more established food co-ops do. The Cooperative League estimates that 500,000 families buy \$500 million worth of groceries and other products at established co-ops. The seven largest co-ops do a total of about \$280 million sales a year. They are, in order of size: Berkeley (California), UNICOOP (Puerto Rico), Greenbelt

members in many and one vote system.

PARTICIPATION

An obvious question—put do co-ops get from shopper? According to the editor of Greenbelt S letter, the input is dependent motivation of the co-op important to point out the shoppers at established members.

Spooks In The Wheat Fields

by Ed Murray

Editor's Note: This story is a special to UP-DATE. The author is a freelance writer, based in Washington, D.C., specializing in economic and consumer affairs.

If a shifty-looking character in a tan trench coat approaches you with an offer of a CIA report don't rush off to the FBI. The report may be the unclassified annual CIA assessment of crop yields in the Soviet Union—a report that the spy agency says it is happy to make available to American farmers.

As a result of the disastrous disruption of grain markets in 1972 when everyone seemed to underestimate the Soviet Union's need for wheat, the CIA and the Department of Agriculture have beefed up their ability to make more accurate estimates of crop yields.

Despite the availability of high technology computers and satellites at the CIA and the extensive resources of USDA, including agricultural attaches overseas, the official estimates have not always been right on target. As one USDA official put it, "It's rather presumptuous of us to think that we can estimate Soviet yields when you consider all the problems we have right here in the U.S. where we can get detailed information on weather, fertilizer availability, seed prices and so on."

Nevertheless, both agencies do try to estimate Soviet grain production. And typically, there is bureaucratic chauvinism that prompted one USDA official to say that "we don't use the CIA data or report in making our estimates."

It's not that USDA considers the CIA data to be unreliable—estimates by both agencies have been fairly close the past few years—but as a CIA spokesman said, "We do ours, they do theirs," and if there's a difference, policy makers can have a range within which to make their judgments.

At the Department of Agriculture, a special task force on Soviet grain production was established after the big 1972 grain purchases. The task force, chaired by Donald Novotny, is made up of representatives from the Foreign Agricultural Service, Economic Research Service, Soil Conservation Service, and the Agricultural Marketing Service.

The task force meets monthly and looks at weather data supplied by the Air Force, Soviet agricultural trade publications, and attache reports, and estimates on a region by region, crop by crop basis of how the Russian crops are doing.

The CIA's next estimate of Soviet crops is scheduled for mid-May and is available to farmers by writing to the Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C., 20505.

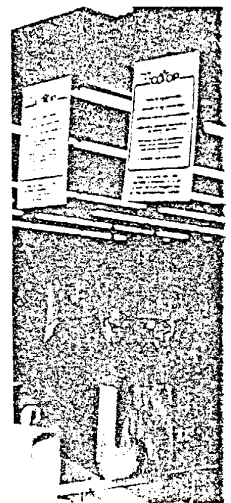
The CIA, on the other hand, uses satellite imagery and sophisticated computers in addition to the standard tools employed by USDA to come up with its own estimates.

From a sampling of areas, the spy agency studies satellite imagery to determine what's happening to crops in the field, and then, using its computers, projects total output.

Last year's CIA and USDA estimates were not that far apart. The CIA was a little low, but according to USDA's Novotny, that may have merely reflected differences in the way the Soviets weigh their harvest. Novotny said in Russia they use a "bunker weight" which includes weeds and rocks from the field along with the grain, and weighing isn't done for a standard moisture content.

A further difficulty in making estimates was pointed out by Novotny. Since estimates are really for four separate crops—winter, spring and summer wheat, as well as coarse grains—a low yield of winter wheat may be made up by higher yields for a later wheat crop or one of the coarse grains.

USDA estimates are regularly released to the press as well as published in various market reports.



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